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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (02/09): TURKEY'S "GROWING ROLE"

Main Stories:

All papers lead with Egyptian hopes for reaching a verbal Gaza truce agreement in the next few days between Hamas and Israel. Al Quds adds that Egypt has submitted to Israel and Hamas a proposal to include an 18-month truce linked to a prisoners' exchange and the opening of two Gaza crossings. The two crossings would be opened for the entry of goods, immediately after the truce begins. Israel would also "cease all hostilities" in the Strip and Hamas would cease all rocket attacks, according to coverage.

All front pages run wire stories about conflicting Israeli responses to the proposed truce and prisoner exchange with Hamas. Israeli Premier Olmert is quoted calling recent statements by Defense Minister Barak that a truce and exchange deal were "very near" as "not helpful." Al Quds runs front page statements by Israeli Minister of Retired Affairs Rafi Eitan stating that a prisoner exchange deal is expected within weeks, not days, and before the new Israeli Prime Minister assumes office.

Al Quds and Al Ayyam, citing AFP, run front page statements by Palestinian Authority Premier Ayyad stressing that his Government has already begun an emergency shelter program for the Gaza, victims of war." Al Ayyam adds that Fayyad called for an end to Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank and called for ending the occupation. Coverage also runs comments by the Speaker of the Fatah parliamentary block Azzam Al Ahmad observing that internal Palestinian division can not be resolved without "democratic dialogue" through the Egyptian initiative. Al Ahmad hoped that "national" intra-Palestinian talks would begin by the end of February. All statements were part of coverage of February 8 meetings between Palestinian officials and a visiting French parliamentary delegation. Al Quds runs a front page AFP story about Jordanian King Abdullah

hoping for speedy Palestinian reconciliation and an end to Arab internal differences as soon as possible.

Al Ayyam runs a front page story on a visit by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas to a hospital in Ankara where Palestinians are being treated for, "injuries sustained in the war on Gaza." Abbas, who is on a tour of foreign capitals, is quoted expressing appreciation for Turkish assistance and its bilateral relations with the PA.

The three papers run front page reports on the death of a Palestinian in Palestinian Authority (PA) Preventative Security detention in Janin. The prisoner reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself. The Independent Human Rights Commission is quoted as visiting and inspecting the detention facility and body of the detainee as part of an investigation into the death. The detainee's family and brother accused PA security of killing him because of his Hamas affiliation. PA security is quoted saying that he was detained for "criminal violations," according to reporting.

Al Hayat Al Jadida runs front page statements by Hamas leader Al Zahhar stating in a February 8 interview with Al Jazeera Arabic TV, that his movement is not against the PLO but rather against its policies.

The three papers run front page reports on Israeli elections scheduled for February 10. Reporting notes that "the war on Gaza pushed" Israeli society to the right and that Likud leader Netanyahu will likely be the next Israeli Premier. Al Hayat Al Jadida further

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reports, citing Israeli daily Haaretz, that current Israeli Premier Olmert will leave office without having fulfilled promises he made to the U.S. administration on evacuating settlement outposts in the West Bank. The paper names the Migron settlement outpost near Ramallah in the West Bank where the Israeli Government, according to the paper, has delayed the evacuation under the pretext of seeking a peaceful agreement with the settlers. Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page adds, citing AFP, that Olmert has endorsed Foreign Minister Livni in the elections.-----

WEEKEND NEWS:

Sunday, February 8

All papers ran similar front page headlines: "Biden stresses the need for a new partnership for the two-state solution." The papers reported extensively on the Vice President's remarks at the Munich security conference, highlighting his comments about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

All front pages report extensively from the February 7 joint press conference held by Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Turkish President Gul. Both presidents highlighted the importance of national Palestinian reconciliation to clear the way for the formation of a new Palestinian government and Gaza reconstruction. Abbas added that any new government whether a national unity or national consensus government, or even a government of technocrats should not suffer a new siege imposed on the Gaza Strip and should work as quickly as possible to hold democratic presidential and legislative elections.

"Fayyad: We intend to present a transparent mechanism for reconstructing what was destroyed by Israel during its aggression against Gaza- We spent \$2,250 billion on the Gaza Strip since the Hamas takeover of power," according to headlines on all front pages.

According to reporting, Fayyad will present the new mechanism at the March donors' conference in Cairo. Fayyad also renewed his call for the formation of a national consensus government

Saturday, February 7

All front pages reported that UNRWA suspended its assistance to the Gaza Strip because Hamas confiscated aid, including ten trucks loaded with wheat and rice. The papers reported that Hamas responded immediately to the halt by stressing the importance of maintaining good relations with UNRWA and that it would return the supplies "that were loaded by mistake onto trucks owned by the [Hamas] Ministry of Social Affairs."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Khalid Hroub comments in Al Ayyam under the title, " Hamas needs humility"(02/09): "It's the Palestinians' right to hold Hamas accountable for its current national policy [and hold it responsible] should it seek to profit from or waste post-war opportunities, especially since [Palestinians] paid a high, dire price for the war. To be more precise, Hamas must present a national political platform, not a partisan or factional one... [unity] is destroyed by any calls for new bodies of authority [to replace the PLO.]"

2) Al Sayid opines in Al Quds under the title, "The growing Turkish role in the Middle East"(0/09): "It's well known that Turkey has succeeded in [brokering] an agreement for water sharing with Syria and Iraq, which might be soon implemented... this would give Ankara more regional, political influence in dealing with Iraq and Palestine issues and maybe more."

WALLES